

# FACT SHEET

## YOUNG ADULTS\*

### I. Overview

Definition: A young adult is defined to be between ages 19-29.

Twelve million young adults were uninsured in 1999 (representing approximately one forth of the 44 million uninsured in the U.S.A. for that same time).

30% of young adults were uninsured in 1999 while only 16% of children 18 and younger and 16% of adults age 30-64 were uninsured.

From 1987 to 1999 there has been a 36% increase in the number of young adults uninsured.

Older adults are 50% less likely to be uninsured than young adults.

### II. College Age Young Adults

Approximately one-third of the 18 million young adults of college age attend college full-time. College students are very likely covered under their parent's health insurance policies or through their college or university.

There is a strong direct relationship between income and college attendance.

Of 6.5 million students age 19 – 23 --- over 3 million (50%) are covered as dependents under employer sponsored insurance (ESI)

1.2 million (18%) are covered through college health plan

780,000 (12%) are covered by public health, ESI in own name, or other coverage

#### **1.3 million (19%) are uninsured**

There is a strong direct relationship between young adults from higher-income families and insurance coverage.

Twelve million young adults age 19 – 23 are not in school.

- 5 million are not insured (38%)
- Males are less likely to be covered than females
- Minorities are less likely to be covered than whites

### III. Working Young Adults

Young working adults are less likely to have ESI than older workers.

42% of young adult workers (19 – 29) are covered by own employer insurance vs. 62% of older adults.

Only 61% of employers of young adults offer ESI (39% do not offer a health plan)

35% of young workers are not eligible for their employer's sponsored plan (look back provisions, part-time or temporary positions or waiting time effect eligibility)

17% decline coverage when offered, citing cost as the major criteria for refusing.

7% of young workers are both offered and eligible for a health plan vs. 82% of older workers.

Take up rates for young workers are 80% vs. 84% for older workers. Implication is that young workers want coverage.

### IV. Medicaid and Other

*“Medicaid insures less than 9 percent of single, childless young adults with incomes below 200 percent of poverty and only 12 percent of married, similarly low-income young adults.” (Schoen and Buatti)*

41% of the 17 million young adults that are single, childless and living on their own are uninsured.

### V. Policy Implications

Encouragement of low-wage firms to offer coverage would particularly help young workers.

Reducing the waiting time for eligibility would benefit young workers just entering the work force.

Young workers are low actuarial risks so public or private sector insurance could be made available with only a slight increase in total insurance premiums.

\*Source:

Quinn, K., Schoen, C. & Buatti, L. (2000, May). Health Insurance: On their own: Young adults living without health insurance. The Commonwealth Fund. [On-Line]. Available HTTP: [http://www.cmwf.org/programs/insurance/quinn\\_ya\\_391.asp](http://www.cmwf.org/programs/insurance/quinn_ya_391.asp) [2001, June 8]

The Commonwealth Fund. (2000, May 24). 12 Million Young Adults Lack Health Insurance: Double the Rate for Older Americans. The Commonwealth Fund. [On-Line]. Available HTTP: <http://www.cmwf.org/media/releases/quinn%5Frelease05242000.asp> [2001, July 2]

The Commonwealth Fund. (2000, May). On Their Own: Young Adults Living Without Health Insurance. The Commonwealth Fund. [On-Line]. Available HTTP: <http://www.cmwf.org/programs/insurance/quinn%5Fya%5Fbn%5F391.asp> [2001, July 2]